

**SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL**

**CABINET**

**DATE: 21 JUNE 2011**

**REPORT OF: CLLR KAY HAMMOND, CABINET MEMBER  
FOR COMMUNITY SAFETY**

**LEAD OFFICER: STEVE OWEN-HUGHES, DEPUTY  
ASSISTANT CHIEF FIRE OFFICERS**

**SUBJECT: ISLE OF WIGHT 999 FIRE AND RESCUE CALL TAKING AND  
MOBILISING**



**KEY ISSUE/DECISION:**

1. Previously an agreement in principle was reached between the Cabinet Member for Community Safety and the Chief Fire Officer to explore merging the Isle of Wight (IOW) Fire and Rescue Service and Surrey Fire and Rescue Service emergency mobilising controls at Surrey Fire and Rescue Service's facility in Reigate. Following full IOW Council approval and a full IOW Cabinet decision the IOW is ready to approach Surrey formally to go ahead with the merger.
2. Cabinet is invited to approve the proposed merger of the emergency mobilising controls as set out in this report

**Details:**

**Background and Business Case:**

3. The Fire Minister announced on the 20th December 2010 that the Department for Communities and Local Government had jointly decided that the requirements of the FiReControl project (Regional mobilising) could not be delivered to an acceptable time-frame. The contract was therefore terminated and the FiReControl project closed down. The Minister's objectives were to give operational certainty to the Fire and Rescue Services and financial certainty to taxpayers
4. The Public Safety Plan and the FireControl briefing paper both recommended merging the mobilising control functions of the IOW into Surrey's control centre in Reigate. Utilising irriducable spare capacity at Surrey and benefiting from economies of scale will enable both authorities to make significant savings.
5. SFRS officers have developed the business case with IOW Fire and Rescue Service. This was commissioned following the submission and acceptance of an outline business case to IOW Council in late 2010 and was jointly produced with Surrey officers. The business case discussed in broad terms the feasibility of transferring the mobilising function of the IOW Fire and Rescue Service to an alternative Fire and Rescue Service in the South East.

The conclusion of this document was that there were overall benefits of a transfer to Surrey Fire and Rescue Service that significantly outweighed the disadvantages and risks identified.

6. The construction of the IOW detailed business case in conjunction with Surrey Officers has involved a full examination and evaluation of the issues including:
  - a. Political will – this is a proof of concept with a partner that we already provide technical support to and takes the concept further in a controlled solution. Central Govt are keen to support this project which in their view is scalable in the future
  - b. Technical feasibility – technical sharing already exists between the two Authorities, an evaluation; that included Surreys technical mobilising provider, has concluded that it is relatively straight forward to achieve call taking and mobilising and that future phases could add other benefits to IOW in sharing mobilising back office support systems and command and control functions too.
  - c. Financial Benefits – There are financial benefits for both Authorities by sharing resources and benefiting from economies of scale to reduce the cost of mobilising functions to both parties. For the IOW in transferring the call taking and mobilising function to Surrey it means they can reduce their budget significantly, for Surrey by utilising irreducible spare capacity it can share the financial burden and safeguard future technology upgrade costs by sharing these costs with a partner.
7. The conclusion of the study is that there is a compelling rationale for the Isle of Wight to transfer their mobilising function to Surrey. A transfer is technically feasible, the drivers identified in the outline business case are valid, and the benefits achievable and realistic. Furthermore, the transfer can be carried out in a controlled manner that poses no risk to the safety of both Surrey and Isle of Wight residents. Significant initial transitional costs of up to £275,565 to achieve the transfer have been identified and would fall to IOW. However, these may be met by DCLG; and a joint case has been made following the demise of the Regional Control Centre Project, DCLG have indicated that financial support would be forthcoming.

<b>Project plan and timescale</b>
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8. In order to ensure readiness for the Olympics Surrey FRS will 'lock down' its IT and Command and Control process at the end of February 2012. This therefore provides a transfer window of April-October 2011 in order to allow time to bed the new ways of working in. If missed then no further opportunity will be available until after September 2012 by which time the IOW mobilising system will become untenable. An assumption is made that the plan will be approved, and the necessary decisions taken by the end of June 2011. The timescale as described below is based upon this.

#### Formation of project:

9. On receipt of Cabinet approval and formal approach from IOW, it will be necessary to formalise the proposed transfer of the mobilising function as a project. Governance will be provided by an elected Members' panel and a project board, with a delivery board controlling the outputs of the project. It is estimated that the formation of the project structure, completion of supporting documentation, and the initial meetings of the groups will take between 3-4 weeks from approval.

#### Breakdown of work and allocation of work packages:

10. The scope of the project will be divided into 2 broad categories; the transfer of the mobilising functions to SFRS, and the creation of a working system for those activities which support mobilising. This includes the possibility of future improvement for the IOW under a second phase of the project by using Surrey back office and command and control systems. The planning and allocation of this work is likely to take 4 weeks, but can be achieved simultaneously as the project evolves.

#### Pilot:

11. The completion of a successful pilot is seen as a key milestone within the project. The broad aim will be to prove that the solution is technically possible, by connecting a nominated IOW fire station to all Surrey systems for a short period of time. This is a significant piece of work that will require cooperation across Council departments, SFRS and with Fortec, our IT system suppliers. It is assessed that this could take up to 8 weeks to complete, and a pilot would therefore take place in mid-late July.

#### Go-Live De-confliction from Major Events:

12. The timescale outlined above to date would suggest that a transfer is unlikely before August 2011 at the very earliest. It is felt prudent to avoid any conflict between significant transfer milestones, and planned events that impact heavily on IOW and Surrey FRS. In this respect it is proposed that during the IOW Festival 10-12 June, and the week preceding it, project activity will be minimal. A similar caveat applies to the IOW Festival 8-11 September.

#### Testing:

13. The testing schedule would be subject to the outcomes of the pilot, but given the de-confliction with the IOW Festival it is likely to occur in late June. It would involve the testing of the technical solution at all stations. It would also involve the testing of the SFRS Fire Control procedures using scripts prepared by the IOW FRS, and other elements of user testing that was deemed necessary by the project board or elected members. Testing could take up to 1 week, dependant on the depth of activity deemed appropriate.

#### Go-Live:

14. The results of the testing will need to be formally reviewed by the project board and elected Members, in order to decide if both Surrey and IOW FRS are in a position to transfer the mobilising function, if further work is required

prior to further testing, or if the project should be abandoned. This decision will potentially inform the final package of preparatory work for a transfer, and it is anticipated that these activities will take no less than 2 weeks, meaning that a go-live would be in August or September.

15. There are different options for how a switchover could be achieved, in relation to the timeframe. A complete reconfiguration of equipment across the mobilising function and all stations on the island can be achieved well within a 24 hour period, and most activities such as the switching of 999 calls to SFRS would be instantaneous. A more gradual roll-out over to SFRS over a period of days would in some respects de-risk the transfer and allow progress to be monitored, but would introduce command and control problems i.e. different parts of the IOW under control of different fire and rescue services. It is therefore recommended that the transfer is carried out as near to instantaneously as is possible.

<b>Assumptions</b>
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16. It is assumed that the additional funding needed to cover the transitional costs is available in full from IOW or DCLG.
17. This is a joint project, working closely with IOW who will project manage the process using prince 2 with a joint governance model.
18. The significant costs incurred by the transfer, and the lengthy preceding project would make regular switching of provider unattractive. It is assumed therefore that IOW FRS would look to an initial 5 year contract, resulting in significant cost reductions for both Authorities.

### Consultation

19. Internal: Strategic Director for Customer and Communities, Communities Select Committee, PVR Member reference Group, Leader and PVR steering board, Cabinet Member, Fire Brigades Union.
20. External: Fire Brigades Union, Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Service, Isle of Wight Full Cabinet, Isle of Wight full Council, Isle of Wight residents

### Financial and value for money implications

21. SFRS has spare capacity within its call handling and mobilisation centre that cannot be released due to operational requirements. Providing this function for IOW will utilise this capacity.
22. Initial set up costs of £275,565 have been identified which will be met by either central government or IOW so will not be an expense for SCC.
23. The total cost of operating the centre and therefore share of costs chargeable to IOW will be developed as part of the project. This will feed into the terms of the final agreement between SCC and IOW, along with protocols for changes to the service provision and any future equipment needs.

### **Equalities implications**

24. An Equalities Impact Assessment is being carried out. In Surrey most house fires occur in lower income groups and the over 70s: As call handling would not be impaired this should not create any disadvantage.

### **Risk management implications**

25. IOW and SFRS conducted a thorough joint PESTLE analysis, from this it was clear that there would be no impact on Surrey as its mobilising standard would be unaffected. However, the following risks will require careful management throughout the set up period
- a. Fire Brigades Union/mobilising function staff opposition and challenge to the transfer.
  - b. Fire Brigades Union/mobilising function staff opposition and challenge to TUPE or redundancy process - IOW believe this is now resolved.
  - c. Public dissatisfaction with the proposal – A campaign has already been launched in IOW and will be extend to Surrey if the project is approved.
  - d. Definition of a contract and price that is acceptable to both IOW and SFRS/ IOW and Surrey County Councils.
  - e. IOW Council departments unable to provide appropriate resource to support the transfer process – IOW have been preparing their team since January and contact has already been made with relevant SCC Officers.
  - f. Failure of the current IOW mobilisation system, leading to or exacerbating death or injury.

### **Implications for the Council's Community Strategy priorities**

26. The Surrey Strategic Partnership Plan includes a priority to improve learning, health and employment outcomes for children and young people, particularly for the vulnerable and disadvantaged. Additionally all County Councillors are corporate parents and reports must consider and set out any impact upon/implications for Looked after Children. This course of action will have no detrimental effect on the Council's Community Strategic priorities.

### **Climate change/carbon emissions implications**

27. The County Council attaches great importance to being environmentally aware and wishes to show leadership in cutting carbon emissions and tackling climate change.
28. This proposal would see the reduction of the carbon footprint for Isle of Wight with no impact in Surrey

### **Legal implications/legislative requirements**

29. This is an innovative project, which will require a joint agreement between SCC and the IOW, addressing all the relevant legal aspect including pricing structure, liabilities and legal powers. TUPE issues will need to be addressed. The CFO has sought advice from the Chief Fire and Rescue Advisor and the

Fire and Resilience Director at DCLG on this matter who are in full support of this initiative.

### **Section 151 Officer Commentary**

30. The Section 151 Officer confirms that all material, financial and business issues and risks have been considered / addressed. By sharing costs the project has potential to deliver significant savings between authorities. Before final agreements are signed further financial analysis will be required as part of the project implementation to establish total operating costs and the appropriate share attributable to the IOW.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

That the Cabinet:

- a. Delegates authority to the Cabinet Member for Community Safety, discussion with Strategic Director Customers and Communities and the Deputy Leader to agree the terms of an agreement with the Isle of Wight Fire Authority under which SFRS will provide a 999 fire and rescue call taking and mobilising service to the Isle of Wight [on the terms set out in this report]
- b. That an elected Members' panel and project board is set up to oversee the development of the project and operational transfer of IOW's call handling and emergency mobilisation to SFRS.

### **REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:**

This proposal allows both services to achieve the most valuable elements of the original DCLG FireControl project aims: improving efficiency, enhancing technology and building resilience. This decision is based on principles of localism and is not an imposed solution. It provides a better operational solution for both services and gives Surrey the ability to sustain and improve its mobilising and communications systems post the DCLG FireControl project, in time for the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

It will provide a sustainable and improving Operational Assurance regime with reinvestment through income generation that will benefit both Surrey and the Isle of Wight in the long-term, the rational reinvestment of income will help assure future resilience.

### **WHAT HAPPENS NEXT:**

Isle of Wight Council will formally approach Surrey County Council to take 999 calls and mobilise Isle of Wight FRS to emergencies on their behalf.

### **Contact Officer:**

Steve Owen-Hughes, Deputy Assistant Chief Fire Officer, Surrey Fire and Rescue Service (Tel. no. 01737 242444)

**Consulted:**

## Internal:

Strategic Director Customers and Communities, Communities Select Committee, Public Value Review Member Reference Group, Leader and Public Value Review Steering Board, Fire Brigades Union (Surrey).

## External:

Isle of Wight FRS, Isle of Wight full Cabinet, Isle of Wight residents, Fire Brigades Union (IOW)

**Informed:**

CLT and Communities Select Committee

**Sources/background papers:**

SFRS Public Value Review report, SFRS Public Safety Plan, SFRS C2 paper, DCLG consultation to cancellation of regional control centres. IOW outline business case, IOW full business case.